

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1955

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1703

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TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, PINS, PORG, PINT, EAID, EFIN, TS

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA: SUMMARY OF 1976 REPORT

REF : STATE 45319, STATE 47016, STATE 3725, 75 TUNIS A-17

1. EMBASSY'S 1976 REPORT ON STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA
POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT MARCH 10, FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF THIS
REPORT:

2. THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA REMAINS LARGELY
AS DESCRIBED IN THE EMBASSY'S 1975 REPORT. THE TUNISIAN
CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED POLITICAL
AND SOCIAL LIBERTIES AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM PROVIDES,
IN PRINCIPLE, PROTECTION TO INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS AGAINST
UNJUST PROSECUTION BY AUTHORITIES. WHILE THE POLITICAL SYSTEM
IS BASED ON A SINGLE PARTY AND NO OTHER POLITICAL
ASSOCIATION IS ALLOWED TO EXIST, TUNISIAN SOCIETY IS
RELATIVELY OPEN AND ALL SIGNIFICANT SECTORS EXERCISE A
VOICE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS. INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, AS KNOWN AND
PRACTICED IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES, IS CURTAILED IN TUNISIA
BY THE GOVERNMENT'S INTERPRETATION OF ITS POWER TO SAFE-
GUARD INTERNAL SECURITY. TUNISIAN CITIZENS DO NOT ENJOY THE
FULL RANGE OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FREEDOM THAT IS EMBODIED
IN UNITED NATIONS DECLARATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS BUT THE LEVEL
OF PERSONAL FREEDOM HERE IS PROBABLY SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER
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THAN IN OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES.

3. THE GOT'S CONCERN FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL SECURITY AGAINST DOMESTIC DISSIDENTS AND SUBVERSIVE FORCES SUPPORTED BY TUNISIA'S FOREIGN ENEMIES HAS PROBABLY LED IT TO THE USE OF PHYSICAL TORTURE AND DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL AS TOOLS OF CONTROL. THIS CONCLUSION IS DRAWN FROM "INFORMED LOCAL OPINION" AND THE EMBASSY IS NOT IN A POSITION TO SUBSTANTIATE SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS OF SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA. WHILE SOME ALLEGATIONS MAY WELL BE TRUE, MANY ARE MADE BY ANTI-GOT ELEMENTS WITH LITTLE REGARD FOR TRUTH. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THE GOT DOES NOT USE OR TOLERATE THE USE OF ASSASSINATION AS A POLITICAL WEAPON.

4. TUNISIA HAS NOT BEEN A FOCUS OF ATTENTION IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. SOME GROUPS BASED IN EUROPE AND MOTIVATED BY POLITICAL AFFINITY TO ANTI-GOT TUNISIANS HAVE PUBLICIZED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUPS BASED IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE TAKEN INTEREST IN SOME TUNISIANS JAILED FOR THEIR ROLE IN POLITICAL AGITATION.

5. THE EMBASSY CONTINUES TO ASSESS THE GOT AS RELATIVELY BENIGN. WHILE THERE ARE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE PATTERN OF VIOLATION DOES NOT WARRANT PUNITIVE ACTION BY THE USG IN THE FORM OF CURTAILMENT OF ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES. IN ANY EVENT, GIVEN THE RELATIVELY MODEST LEVEL OF OUR ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE GOT WOULD SACRIFICE WHAT IT REGARDS AS AN ESSENTIAL VIGILANCE IN INTERNAL SECURITY IN RESPONSE TO A THREATENED SEVERANCE OF ASSISTANCE.
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